


PARK COUNTY

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**COMMUNITY**

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FOUNDATION



**NONPROFIT  
ACTION**

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Assess. Coach. Train.

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## Smart Talk: Conversations that Work

Conversations that solve issues instead of  
Confrontations that start them

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**Keva Ward**  
**Nonprofit ACTION Program Coordinator**  
**Park County Community Foundation**

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# Purpose

"100% of customers are humans. 100% of employees are humans. If you don't understand humans, you don't understand business.

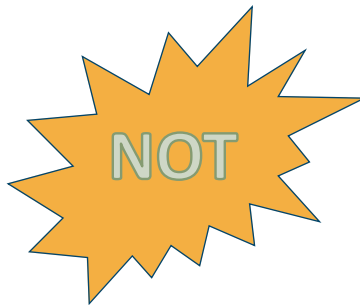
*~Simon Sinek, NYT Best selling author of Start With Why*

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This



NOT



This



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## What's the big deal with *conflict*?

**Why do we avoid it?**

**What is the *cost* of avoiding it?**

**What is the opposite of conflict?**

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## The Story of Us

*We're all in the same boat  
from the beginning*

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## Exactly the Same – Only Different



Anxiety

Self-absorption

Emotional symbiosis

Loss of empathy

Objectification of Others



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## Conflict is inevitable



How we handle it is our choice

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## Navigating Conflict

*Peace is not the absence of conflict; it's the  
ability to handle conflict by peaceful means.*

*~Ronald Reagan*

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## Normalize conflict to minimize it

**Conflict is *going to happen*;**

**Avoiding or engaging it causes confusion, frustration, and destructive behaviors.**

**Handling it skillfully leads to connection, collaboration, and less conflict.**

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## The Brain

*To understand relationship, we need  
to understand the brain.*

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## It really IS all in your head...



**Understanding what's  
happening in the brain is  
the key to skillful  
conversations.**

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## Two main parts of the Brain

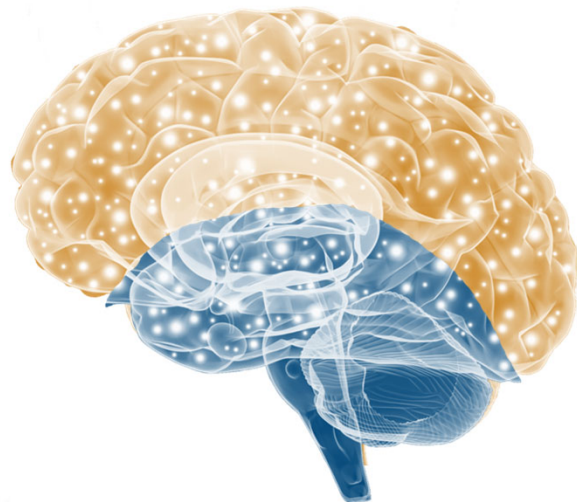
### The Lower Brain

**Responsible for keeping us alive**

**Survival is its ONLY objective**

**Hypervigilant in scanning the  
environment for danger**

**Negativity bias – geared for fear**

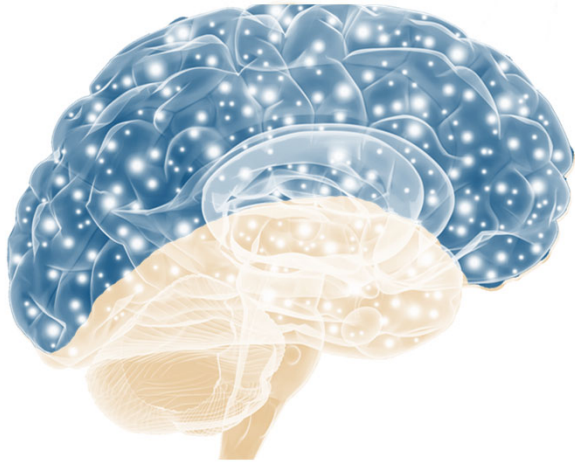


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## Two main parts of the Brain



### The Upper Brain

Largest and most recent part of the brain

Controls higher function such as abstract thought, imagination, self-regulation, adherence to social norms, empathy and other emotions.

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## Smart Talk

*"Talking is the most dangerous thing humans do;  
Listening is the most infrequent."*

*~ Harville Hendrix, PhD,  
NYT Bestselling Author, Getting the Love You Want*

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**Monologue**

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**Creates inequality and anxiety.**

A blue line-art icon of a megaphone with three green lines radiating from the top, symbolizing a one-way communication.


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**Dialogue**

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**Creates equality and connecting.**

A blue line-art icon of an ear with three green curved lines next to it, and a speech bubble with three green dots inside, symbolizing two-way communication.


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## The basic structure



**One Person Talks**  
(with intention)



**One Person Listens**  
(actively)

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## A culture of safety

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**Appreciates differences and encourages creativity.**

**Collaboration is the norm**



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## Smart Talk – The Process

*“The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.”*

*~ George Bernard Shaw*

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## Three components of Smart Talk



### **Reflect – I hear you**

“Ok, so it sounds like you’re saying...”  
 “Is that accurate?”  
 “What else are you thinking about that?”

### **Respect – I see you**

“Hmmm, that makes sense (given that...)”

### **Connect – I’m with you**


“Wow, I wonder if that makes you feel...(sad, mad, upset, happy)  
 “Or maybe some other feeling?”

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## Reflect



Reflecting to the speaker exactly (or close) to what they said accomplishes several important things:

1. It lets them know you really are listening
2. It gives you both a chance to confirm what's been said so far
3. It ensures that you understand what the speaker said and *what they meant by what they said*
4. Sometimes it lets the speaker know that *what they said* isn't really *what they intended*, and it gives them a chance to clarify

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## Respect




Respect the speaker by *validating their experience* – *NOT necessarily agreeing with their stance* but acknowledging that they deserve to be heard and are entitled to their opinion.

1. It lets them know you regard their point of view as *just as valid as your own*
2. It short-circuits the fear-based reaction they may be having and promotes a sense of safety
3. It's just the truth – they **DO** deserve to be heard just as much as anyone else.

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## Connect




**Connection is the key - it's what you're aiming for by cultivating Empathy.**

1. Connecting through empathy is the desired outcome
2. Connection - no matter how passing or formal - basically IS psychological safety
3. Empathy leading to connection is a skill that can be developed and honed, and in the process will make each of us better leaders and better humans.

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## The results of Smart Talk



**Reflect - I hear you**  
**Respect - I see you**  
**Connect - I'm with you**

**Helping people feel *heard, seen and valued* is what psychological safety is all about.**

**Smart Talk accomplishes all three**

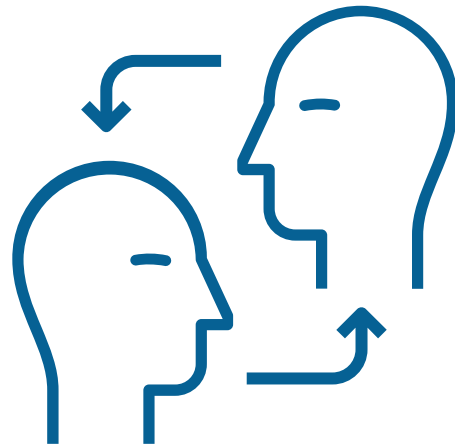
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## Appreciation Dialogue

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**Demonstrate reflecting an appreciation.**  
**Practice reflecting an appreciation.**  
**Group feedback.**



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## A few pointers

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- **Make eye contact and speak in calm, neutral tones**
- **Take a few deep breaths before starting the conversation**
- **Maintain open and neutral body posture**
- **Resist the temptation to interrupt, keep negativity OUT**

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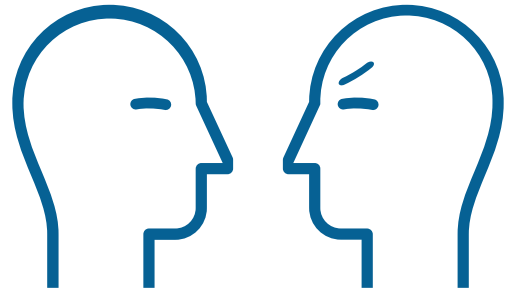
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## Frustration Dialogue

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**Demonstrate expressing a frustration.**  
**Practice expressing a frustration.**  
**Group feedback.**



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## Questions & Answers

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**Questions, comments, insights, suggestions are all welcome!**

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